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Atari Online News, Etc.  
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Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor  
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor  
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor  
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"  
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"  
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"  
Rob Mahlert -- Web site  
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

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->From the Editor's Keyboard                      "Saying it like it is!"  
"\*\*\*\*\*"

By now, I'm sure that most of you have heard me lament about time flying by too quickly. These past few weeks, however, I wish that the work week would speed by and weekends lasted a little longer! It has been total insanity at the hospital where I work. Everyone is frantic because of our pending accreditation survey. Now remember, that we go through this process every three years. You would think that people would learn from the past, take advantage of the next few years to make improvements, and continue to move forward. That would make sense, right? Well, here we are again, trying to fix everything to pass this survey. And what will happen as soon as this thing is over? Right. Back to the way things were. Unbelievable! I can't wait until this thing is over.

So, how's the weather been in your neck of the woods lately? Here, we've gone the total routine, from warm temperatures to frosty mornings. Still, it hasn't been bad. We could be hit with what some of our neighbors have been getting: tornadoes, hurricanes, and whatnot. We've managed to keep up with the trees around here, and even getting ahead of things. Probably just in time to beat the snow.

Hey, I know that Joe and I are looking forward to Thanksgiving next week. I can almost smell that turkey now! It's one holiday that I really enjoy. This year, we may have some of my family drop by to share in our feast. Time will tell. We here at A-ONE want to wish you all a happy holiday.

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING  
compiled by Joe Mirando  
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, my countdown clock is now set... only a little more than six days 'till Thanksgiving and that enormous, delicious, stupendous turkey! Can you tell that I love turkey?

If you've been reading this column for more than a year, you might remember that I've got a large family, and that holidays are usually a series of visits to one house or another for meals. And yes, I mean multiple meals. It's not unheard of for me to have three or four meals on Thanksgiving. The secret, I've found, is to eat only a little bit at each stop. Of course, being of an ethnic family (both Poles and Italians believe in large meals as a means of celebration), I've found that if you move things around and spread food out on the plate, people tend not to notice that you're not having a lot.

Anyway, as usual, the turkey that my wife will be getting from work will be going to the local FoodShare. I'll buy a turkey breast at the supermarket and we'll have that here on Thanksgiving... before we go to my parents' house... and my sister's house, and my wife's sister's house... and my aunt's house and... and... and... Well, you get the idea.

This week's column is going to be short, since there's a real shortage of messages in the NewsGroup this time around. So let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup  
=====

Rory McMahon asks about an english RSC file for N.AES:

"I am looking for a english rsc for N.AES install. Any info or links are greatly appreciated.

I bought a CD version from 16/32 Systems some time back, but when I start the setup.app, the text is in German. I would like a SETUP.RSC that is in English. Is there such a file?

Or will this file need to be edited in a RSC editor?"

'Janez' tells Rory:

"It is wise to install N.AES by hand... I remember many people had problems or had tad weird setups after they used installer.. Would be glad to help you with installing, just drop me a mail if you will have problems..."

Rory tells Janez:

"Ok, I will probably need some help.

Installed N.AES with MiNT. Boots fine, but when I shut down improperly, the MiNT partition doesn't get fsck'd. It just boots into Thing and when I open the MiNT drive, I get an error:

```
pid 15 (Thing): Ext2-FS (E):  
WARNING: mounting unchecked fs  
running ef2fsck is recommended  
[OK]
```

I click OK, then the drive directory shows.

I'm assuming the drive is dirty, but a reboot should result in a fsck done on a dirty drive. It does not happen. One of the .CNF files shows the line where the shell is run with fsck, but I cannot tell if this .CNF is actually used. There are several MINT.CNF files in different folders, so debugging this is a problem.

I'm not against in starting over. So if there is a defacto-install FAQ for MiNT, I'm willing to put it to the test.

I've tried EASYMiNT, but I kept getting errors in the TMP folder about decompressing of files."

Edward Baiz adds his experiences:

"Yeah, the same thing happened to me. Running ef2fsck did however, solve my problem. Kind of bad if you have a power outage when using Mint. Linux is the same way.

Not sure about a FAQ for the installation, but I have some information on it somewhere.

For me, Easymint was the best way to install Mint. It worked out great. When I got everything the way I wanted it, I backed up everything on to a CD. I am glad I did as my Mint partition got so screwed up I had to re-initialize my partition. I plan now to put it on a 2gig Jaz cart. I just have to format a Mink exts partition and then put everything back using my CD's."

Ronald Hall tells Edward:

"I'm not sure what you mean about Linux here Edward. I've got Linux running on 3 comps and a laptop, all using the Reiser FS, and power outtages have never done anything to them.

I've found it to be much better than the results I've seen personally when you just switch a Windows machine off..."

Janez tells Ronald and Edward:

"Well power off etc on unix just triggers filesystem check, but rarely do any damage, in worst case u may lost some cached data.. If one would made check on TOS file system after power offs etc, it would be a lot safer as well, problem is, on FAT based systems, check take forever to complete..."

Running MiNT many years now, did a lot of power off's (minix and ext2 file system) and crashes (coding in MiNT) and never lost any data in 10+ years. I did lost whole partition when i played with mke2fs app though."

Dr. Uwe Seimet adds:

"Most Unix file systems use a journal today, which makes them even more reliable in case of an irregular shutdown."

'Dave' tells us that he's...

"Trying to get an old TT up and running. Fixed the PSU, upgraded the RAM, swapped the HD but still a couple of things to do...

The machine has German ROM's. Anybody got a 512k image of UK TOS 3.06 ? Tried the image on <http://home.ptd.net/~cjhafner/> but this is only 256k and generates checksum errors when burnt to EPROMs

Also, the HD has been formatted & partition with AHDI 6 and the driver installed using HDINSTALL but the drive still refuses to autoboot (Tried various HD's) Any suggestions?

Still after a UK TT Keyboard. Anyone??"

Uwe Seimet tells Dave:

"You should check whether this is a problem of AHDI or a general problem, with might be related to your hardware, e.g. the NVRAM, by trying another driver. The demo version of HDDRIVER can be used for that: [http://www.seimet.de/hddriver\\_english.html](http://www.seimet.de/hddriver_english.html)"

'Iron Joe' asks:

"Are the schematics of the following hardware available somewhere:

- PAK68/3
- ADSpeed ST
- CaTTamaran for the TT
- ICD Link II

Is there anybody out there, who could build one of these at home?"

Michael Schwingen tells Joe:

"The PAK68/3... Those were published in the german c't magazine, around 11-1993 - article was split over multiple issues."

Rodolphe Czuba posts this:

"I just want to tell you that I come back in the atari design after a long period (45 days) of inactivity because of moving in my new house... I just get a new aDSL line and it is really better to work ...

What is rolling :

- CTCM are ready and should be come back from assembling.
- CT63 : wait for more orders to get enough money to order 060 and components entries into the factory.
- CTLink : hum, I do not know if I will finish this...No time and I get really more motivation around CT60/63 and the CTPCI...
- CTPCI : I will in the few day begin the first important brainstorming so see the big line to follow and how to solve the bus frequency adaption (the PCI bridge is half the clock of the CT bus).

Microsoft Corp. said Monday it will offer 18 Xbox 360 games when the new version of its video game console hits store shelves in North America next week.

Standard editions of launch titles, including "Kameo: Elements of Power" and "Project Gotham Racing 3," will sell for \$50 - the same as most games for the original Xbox.

The Redmond-based software company will also offer 13 Xbox accessories, including faceplates that can be tacked on to the front of a console to personalize it.

Other accessories, like a wireless controller and a 20-gigabyte hard drive, come standard in the fully loaded \$400 console and are sold separately for a scaled-back version that will sell for \$300.

Over the weekend, Microsoft announced that Xbox 360 users will be able to play "Halo," "Halo 2" and about 200 other games designed for the original Xbox, which came out in the fall of 2001.

Microsoft has said it expects to sell up to 3 million Xbox 360 consoles within 90 days of its North American launch Nov. 22.

The North American debut will be followed by a Dec. 2 launch in Europe and a Dec. 10 launch in Japan.

Sony's PlayStation 2 has slightly more than half of the worldwide market for the most recently available consoles, compared with about 34 percent for the first Xbox and 15 percent for Nintendo Co.'s GameCube, according to Gartner Inc., an industry research group.

#### Dragon Quest VIII Ships For Playstation 2

Square Enix, Inc., the publisher of Square Enix interactive entertainment products in North America, announced that Dragon Quest VIII - Journey of the Cursed King (Dragon Quest VIII) is on sale exclusively for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system. The long-awaited release is supported by an extensive multi-million dollar marketing campaign.

The first PlayStation 2 title in the series, Dragon Quest VIII is the latest in the legendary franchise that has sold over 40 million units worldwide. Updates for the North American release include voice-overs, a full-orchestral soundtrack, a completely renovated menu system, new battle abilities and improved animations. These new additions greatly enhance the gaming experience for the North American audience. A bonus disc will also be included with a playable demo of the North American version of Final Fantasy XII.

"We are extremely excited about Dragon Quest VIII's release in North America. Utilizing state of the art polygon technology, not only the map, but all of Akira Toriyama's characters are created in 3D. The player can freely run around in this wonderfully animated world as far as the eye can see," said Yuji Horii, Creator and Scenario and Game Designer for Dragon Quest. "While we've kept true to what made the series so popular, we've also added several elements for the North American audience and cannot wait for gamers to experience Dragon Quest!"

A mysterious jester. A forbidden sceptre. A fiendish curse. A once idyllic kingdom lies entangled in a web of enchanted vines, its king and princess hideously transformed, its castle and subjects frozen in time. Only one

person has survived this horror unscathed: you!

Only you can save your king and country by lifting the shadow of the evil jester's curse... but it won't be easy. An epic tale of friendship, bravery and adventure awaits you on the grassy fields, snow-capped mountains and restless seas of Dragon Quest VIII!

#### Gameplay Features

- \* The first PlayStation 2 title in the series, Dragon Quest VIII is the latest in the legendary franchise that has sold over 40 million units worldwide.
- \* Dragon Quest VIII showcases the masterfully woven narrative of series creator Yuji Horii, the distinctive character designs of legendary manga artist Akira Toriyama and the grandly evocative orchestral soundtrack of renowned composer Koichi Sugiyama.
- \* Updates for the North American release include voice-overs, a full-orchestral soundtrack, a completely renovated menu system, new battle abilities and improved animations.
- \* Party members deploy awesome attacks and spectacular spells for the first time in stunning 3D.
- \* Playable Final Fantasy XII demo included exclusively with the North American version.

#### Ubisoft And Square Enix Bring Drakengard 2 For Playstation 2 To North America and Europe

Ubisoft, one of the world's largest video game publishers, announced that it has signed an exclusive publishing deal with Square Enix to bring Drakengard 2 to North America and Europe. Under the agreement, Ubisoft will distribute Drakengard 2 for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system.

Ubisoft is expanding its prior collaboration with Square Enix. Last year Ubisoft published Star Ocean Till the End of Time for PlayStation 2 and distributed the Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) Final Fantasy XI for Windows throughout Europe.

Drakengard 2 is a role-playing action game featuring knights and dragons that builds on the scenario of the original title. Released in Japan last June, Drakengard 2 became an immediate success, topping Japanese sales charts and selling more than 100,000 copies in its first week of release.

"We are very excited to be working with Square Enix to publish this highly anticipated RPG in North America and Europe," said Jay Cohen, vice president of publishing at Ubisoft. "Drakengard 2 is a hit in the Japanese market, and we are sure that North American and European gamers will also be thrilled by this fantastic adventure title."

Drakengard 2 will be available in Europe, North America and Australia in March 2006.



Capcom, a leading worldwide developer and publisher of video games, announced that its popular Street Fighter franchise will make its debut on the PSP (PlayStation Portable) system with Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max. A direct conversion of the critically acclaimed arcade fighting game, Street Fighter Alpha 3, Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max is enhanced with additional original content specifically designed for the portable system including Wi-Fi functionality and extra gameplay modes. Adding to an impressive roster of more than 30 renowned characters from the world famous Street Fighter universe, four additional fighters are joining the fierce competition. Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max is scheduled for release throughout North America in February 2006. To date, the Street Fighter franchise has sold more than 27 million units worldwide.

Utilizing the PSP system's superior performance and technology, Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max features new content specifically designed for the system. A gameplay mode new to the Street Fighter Alpha series, Variable Battle Mode, has been implemented to allow real-time tag team brawls. Tag out and the second fighter enters performing a jump attack, a move useful for escaping tight situations. Yun, Maki and Eagle, from Capcom vs. SNK 2, as well as Ingrid from Capcom Fighting Evolution, enter the arena and are perfectly reproduced with all new original storylines. Versus battles heat up with the Wi-Fi League Battle Mode that allow a maximum of eight players to duke it out in round-robin mini tournaments.

Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max delivers the same compelling experience that players have come to expect from the series. Gamers can choose an 'ism' to govern a character's ability to perform powerful combo moves and select from a host of different gameplay modes which offer endless replay value. Arcade Mode pits the player in a series of matches against CPU controlled opponents. In Survival Mode, battle against a series of enemies until getting KO'd. Dramatic Battle Mode lets players team up with a CPU controlled character to fight an enemy. Fight the final boss in Final Battle Mode. Play alone or with friends in four network modes: Go mano-a-mano with any playable character in Versus Mode. Select a team of three characters and engage in a series of team battles with Team Battle Mode. In Versus Dramatic Battle Mode, mix and match the combinations of brawlers as gamers can stack the deck against an opponent with 2 characters-on-1 character matches. Participate in infinite tag team competitions with Verses Variable Battle Mode.

#### Nintendo to Issue New Version of Console

Nintendo Co. has become the latest console maker to promise parents the means to help restrict their children's access to violent video games.

The new version of Nintendo's videogame console, called Revolution and due out in 2006, will allow users to require passwords for video games that carry certain ratings, such as "T" for "teen" or "M" for "mature."

Many people associate Nintendo's game consoles with younger users, and few games designed for its systems have a lot of violence or sexuality.

Although the company didn't receive many customer requests for parental controls, "it is something that I just think is right to do," said Perrin Kaplan, vice president for marketing at Nintendo's U.S. headquarters in Redmond, Wash.

The move echoes Redmond-based Microsoft Corp.'s efforts to bolster parental controls with its Xbox 360, due out next Tuesday.

The new Microsoft console lets users restrict access to video games and DVDs that carry certain ratings. It also gives parents ways to control who their children interact with on the company's Xbox Live online gaming service.

Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 2 has parental controls for movies but not games. The company has not yet detailed plans for its forthcoming PlayStation 3.

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Ahead of Internet Summit, Tunisia Blasted for Censorship

As the U.N. summit on the Internet is set to begin in Tunisia on November 16, the country is being sharply criticized for its record of online censorship.

Tunisia developed the idea for the World Summit on the Information Society, and was chosen to host the event's second phase. The first phase was held in Geneva in December 2003.

But critics, accusing Tunisia of censorship and human-rights abuses, have questioned whether the country deserves such recognition in information technology.

"It's totally ridiculous," said Julien Pain, who runs the Internet Freedom Desk at the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders. "It's like asking North Korea to host a conference on human rights."

The U.N. division that is in charge of the summit, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), has noted that Tunisia was chosen, in part, to highlight how unrepresented African nations are in Internet usage.

Only about 3 percent of the world's Internet users are in Africa, leading the ITU to pick a host country in the continent that is also a developing economy.

Tunisia has been eager to use the summit to showcase the country's commitment to technology, which it sees as an engine for economic growth. The country even took out a full-page ad in the International Herald Tribune to spread the message.

The Tunisian government has admitted that it censors online postings, but claims only to do so if the messages seem to be a call to violence or if they express racism.

The country also has noted that it was the first Arab country to guarantee

universal human rights in its constitution.

But Reporters Without Borders, as well as other watchdog groups, have been denouncing Tunisia for years, noted Pain.

"What's going on there in terms of human rights is troubling," he said. "The censorship extends to more than the Internet. There are people being stabbed and beaten for what they say."

The summit is something of a double-edged sword, he added. It will shed light on Tunisia's alleged censorship, but at the same time, critics say the U.N. is congratulating Tunisia on its practices by holding the meeting in that country.

### Nations Urge U.S. to Cede Internet Control

Despite a late-night agreement averting a global showdown over continued U.S. control of the Internet's addressing system, many delegates to a U.N. technology summit did not believe the Americans emerged victorious.

Representatives of a number of countries remained adamant that U.S. control must be tempered if the Internet is to fully reach its potential. And even traditional allies of Washington considered it to have opened the door to the possibility of more shared governance.

President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe spoke for the more radical opposition to U.S. control, saying Washington and its allies cannot continue to "insist on being world policemen on the management of the Internet."

"Why should our diverse world be beholden to an American company", he told more than 10,000 government, business and other delegates as the three-day U.N. World Summit on the Information Society opened Wednesday.

A quasi-independent group, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN, manages the worldwide network's main addressing computers on the U.S. government's behalf.

Mugabe's remarks signaled that, despite the U.S. success in winning over a broad group of nations including the European Union bloc, underlying complaints about American hegemony in Internet control still linger.

In an extreme case, complaints left unchecked could prompt dissatisfied countries to create their own addressing system, splintering the Internet such that two people typing in the same Web address may reach different sites, depending on where they live.

Questions about the Internet's plumbing have overshadowed the summit's original intent: to address ways to expand communications technologies to poorer parts of the world.

Delegates from more than 100 countries wrapped up nearly three days of heavy talks late Tuesday by agreeing to leave the United States with oversight of the computers that act as the Internet's master directories so Web browsers and e-mail programs can find other computers.

David Gross, the U.S. State Department's top official on Internet policy, said he was thrilled by the last-minute deal, saying it "reaffirmed the

role of technology to the world and preserved the unique role of the U.S."

Publicly, officials were positive on the agreement, noting that it brought together government, business and civil leaders to work out issues surrounding Internet governance.

Privately, many delegates fumed, noting that the secretive talks, which had been expected, seemed to take away from the focus of the summit. Many complained that the United States was grandstanding.

Martin Selmayr, an EU spokesman, said the 25-nation European bloc was the one celebrating after the deal was reached.

The EU had stepped up pressure for more international participation after the United States declared in June that it would not cede control over the Internet, as many had been led to believe.

"What we see here is a clear indication that what they (the U.S.) said in June is not the last word and that we are back on track towards internationalization," he said. "We are back on track to what has been agreed with the Clinton administration already some years ago. We are back to cooperation."

Although Pakistan and other countries sought a takeover of that system by an international body such as the United Nations, negotiators ultimately agreed, as time ran out, to create an open-ended international forum for raising important Internet issues. The forum, however, would have no binding authority.

"The U.S. has done a good job making the Internet safe for robust political discussion and commerce, but will gradually need to start recognizing international norms," said Frank Pasquale, a law school professor at Seton Hall University in New Jersey.

Regardless of who claimed victory, delegates and officials involved in the talks said the new forum would give nations a stronger say in how the Internet works, including perhaps spurring the availability of domain suffixes in Chinese, Urdu and other languages.

"They want a seat at the table and they have a forum at which to have a seat," said Paul Kane, chairman of an organization for European country-code domain suffixes.

Currently, though names partially in another language are possible, the suffix - the ".com" part - remains in English.

The new group, the Internet Governance Forum, could also address any issue, such as spam or cybercrime, not currently covered by ICANN.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who would open the forum's first meeting perhaps early next year in Athens, denied the United Nations wanted to assume ICANN's day-to-day duties.

"Let me be absolutely clear: the United Nations does not want to take over, police or otherwise control the Internet," he said. "Day-to-day running of the Internet must be left to technical institutions, not least to shield it from the heat of day-to-day politics."

## Sober Virus Clones Taunt AV Vendors

A new batch of Sober virus clones has been spammed around the world to seed botnets for malicious use, anti-virus vendors warned Tuesday.

The appearance of the latest threat comes 24 hours after law enforcement authorities in Germany predicted the Sober mutants would appear as e-mail attachments in German or English.

According to F-Secure Corp., an anti-virus vendor based in Finland, at least four new versions of the virus have been detected. All are capable of disabling anti-virus programs, dropping a Trojan horse and opening a backdoor to connect to a remote server.

The Sober threat first appeared on the Internet in October 2003 and has been used in recent months to spread German right-wing extremist nationalism.

Virus writers have also used the excitement associated with next year's World Cup soccer tournament to trick users into executing the virus.

In the latest attack, F-Secure researcher Alexey Podrezov said the virus writers left a message in the code that taunts anti-virus vendors.

"This time the author of Sober worm changed the encryption algorithm for text strings in the worm's body. And he included a message for anti-virus vendors in the worm's body basically saying that 'Use your debuggers, it's fun,'" Podrezov said in an advisory.

Read more here about the Sober virus preying on soccer fans.

The latest version also creates several empty files in the Windows System folder to deactivate previous Sober variants.

"This particular Sober variant checks for the file called 'filesms.fms,' and if such file is found, the worm deactivates itself," Podrezov said.

Upon infection, the virus deactivates security programs installed on the computer, including Microsoft Corp.'s Windows AntiSpyware and McAfee Inc.'s Stinger.

The virus code includes instructions to use Port 25 to send e-mails and Port 587 to connect to certain Yahoo servers.

McAfee's AVERT (Anti-Virus Emergency Response Team) has also spotted four new Sober variants-W32/Sober.s@MM, W32/Sober.t@MM, W32/Sober.u@MM and W32/Sober.v@MM.

McAfee rates the risk to corporate and home computers as "low" and published removal instructions to help affected users.

F-Secure, Symantec Corp. and other anti-virus vendors have also added signatures for the latest variants.

Keylogging malware is on the way to setting a record in 2005, with 6,191 keyloggers unleashed, according to a study released this week by VeriSign iDefense. The number represents a 65 percent increase from the 3,753 keyloggers documented in 2004 and an astronomical increase over the 300 attacks recorded in 2000.

As with most malware, keyloggers are stealthily deployed, silently installed programs that can record every keystroke on infected systems and send the information back to hackers. The spyware is the preferred tool of criminal Internet groups. These cybercrime syndicates package the keystroke programs in phishing e-mail or spyware applications that are able to elude antivirus software and firewalls.

Once a keylogging program is in place, thieves receive strings of text entered while the computer user is online, such as addresses, account numbers, usernames, and passwords. Using their ill-gotten information, hackers have been able to steal a great deal of money from those targeted.

While the study found that only 16 percent of victims were required to pay for some of the fraudulent charges - which averaged \$4,000 per victim - the greatest cost was in time. According to the study, victims spent an average of 81 hours trying to rectify the problem.

Keylogging has grown in popularity among the criminal set, said Frost & Sullivan analyst Rob Ayoub, because hackers have realized that to steal somebody's identity, all they really need is one username and a password. And keyloggers are one of the most efficient methods to get that information.

But despite the current popularity, the tactic is not new. "Keystroke logging is one of the oldest security tricks in the book," said Ayoub. "Hackers know now that if [they] can get one username and password, [they're] going to have pretty good luck getting into a number of different accounts."

The problem, he said, is twofold. First, home users do not understand the importance of maintaining up-to-date antivirus or other security applications on their systems. "[This report] shows the importance of the basics," said Ayoub. "Even home users have to have antivirus and antispyware products on their home machines that are paid for and up to date."

Second, the number of usernames and passwords that people have to remember now is overwhelming, so they typically use just one username and password for all their accounts, which is considered by security experts to be a bad practice. Password manageability is reaching critical mass, said Ayoub, and something is going to have to be done in the near future.

The silent but harmful attacks are not just a problem for home users, said Forrester Research analyst Natalie Lambert. It also is a major threat to corporations. She agreed that the increase in keystroke loggers has to do with the enormous amount of information hackers are able to steal without the user knowing about the theft.

"Professionally, a company's intellectual property is at risk," she said. "A good keystroke logger will extract a lot more information without being noticed than a [more traditional] hacker [can]."

To combat these threats, Lambert suggested, companies must begin deploying antispyware tools that go after these applications and delete them. Other

precautions companies can pursue include installing personal firewalls on the computers of all their employees.

Most personal firewalls allow administrators to block certain ports so that when an unknown keystroke logger tries to send information back to its home base, the firewall blocks that traffic.

#### Spammers Pay Fines Imposed by FTC

Four people operating adult-oriented Web sites and an affiliated e-mail marketer have paid \$621,000 to settle a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) complaint that they violated federal antispam laws, the agency announced Thursday.

The settlement also bars the defendants from violating the Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing (CAN-SPAM) Act, passed in 2003. The settlement also requires the adult-oriented businesses to monitor their affiliates to make sure they also comply with the law.

The defendants sold access to sexually explicit Web sites through unsolicited e-mail, or spam, according to an FTC complaint filed in January.

Four defendants control a network of businesses that operate adult Web sites, and the other defendant was an affiliate hired to market the content from the Web sites. The affiliate sent many of the e-mail messages that allegedly violated federal law, but under CAN-SPAM, all of the defendants are responsible for the e-mail, including the defendants who paid others to send e-mail on their behalf.

The FTC charged that the e-mail violated CAN-SPAM and the FTC's Adult Labeling Rule by failing to include the required label for sexually explicit content. The e-mail also displayed adult material, used misleading header information and subject lines, and failed to include the required opt-out notice, all violations of the law, according to the FTC.

The U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada entered a default judgment against one defendant, requiring him to pay \$79,018, the FTC said in a statement. The remaining defendants settled the FTC charges. Among other requirements, the court orders require the defendants to include working opt-out mechanisms in their commercial e-mail, label any sexually explicit e-mail, and keep sexually oriented material out of the subject line and out of the initially viewable area of any e-mail.

The settlement also requires the adult-oriented business to monitor its marketing affiliates by collecting information about an e-mail campaign, as well as identification information about the affiliates, before they can begin the campaign. Once the e-mail messages are sent, the defendants are required to sample new subscribers to their Web site to make sure the affiliates are complying with the settlement order when sending out marketing e-mail. In addition, the defendants are required to establish a system to gather and respond to consumer complaints.

The settling defendants are Global Net Solutions, Global Net Ventures, Open Space Enterprises, Southlake Group, Wedlake, and WTFRC, doing business as Reflected Networks. Individual defendants are Dustin Hamilton, Tobin Banks, Gregory Hamilton, and Philip Doroff. The district court judge entered the

default judgment against defendant Paul Rose, an affiliate.

#### 'Timeshare Spammer' Gets A Year In Prison

A man dubbed the "Timeshare Spammer" was sentenced Thursday to a year in federal prison and ordered to pay \$120,000.

The sentencing of Peter Moshu of Florida stemmed from his conviction in June on a federal charge of violating the federal CAN-SPAM Act. Moshu was arrested by federal officials after he was named in a lawsuit filed in January by Earthlink Inc., based in Atlanta.

The suit accused Moshu of sending millions of unsolicited commercial e-mails in 2004 and 2005. The missives sought personal information by offering brokerage services for people interested in selling their timeshares, an agreement in which people share vacation homes.

Also on Thursday, Internet service provider Earthlink said it had won a \$15.4 million judgment against Craig Brockwell and his company BC Alliance Inc. Earthlink claimed the Miami man sent hundreds of thousands of unsolicited e-mails advertising discount ink jet printer cartridges and other printer supplies.

U.S. District Court Judge Beverly B. Martin granted late last month Earthlink's request for monetary damages and injunctive relief. The latter prevents Brockwell and his company from illegally spamming any Internet user, regardless of the user's ISP, Earthlink said.

"Both of these cases represent more examples of how civil litigation and legal action can put spammers out of business, Larry Slovensky, assistant general counsel for EarthLink, said in a statement.

#### UK Spammer 'Weaselboy' Gets Six-Year Sentence

A British man was sentenced Wednesday to six years in prison for selling phony .eu domain names and threatening to kill anyone who attempted to report his illegal activities.

Peter Francis-Macrae, 23, of Cambridgeshire, England, earned a reputation as the U.K.'s most prolific spammer. His scams and threats netted him more than \$2.7 million.

Working out of his father's home, Francis-Macrae, also known as "Weaselboy," sent out bogus e-mails to companies that offered preregistration for .eu European domain names and e-mail accounts, or that notified domain owners that their domain was about to expire but could be renewed for a fee.

The .eu domain registration, managed by EURid, will begin a staged registration in December 2005, but will not be open to the general public until April 2006.

Francis-Macrae was found guilty of threatening to destroy or damage property, concealing criminal property, fraudulent trading, blackmail, and



making death threats.

When prospective victims caught on to his scheme, Francis-Macrae threatened them with spam attacks, saying he would send millions of e-mails to destroy their networks.

When Nominet, the .uk domain name registry, issued warnings about Francis-Macrae's exploits, he threatened to attack its systems with a botnet of 200,000 zombie PCs unless the warning was withdrawn.

The more than \$170,000 a week Francis-Macrae collected might explain why the brazen cyber thief even phoned in death threats to police investigators, telling them he would "make sure you never answer another phone again as long as you live. My name is Peter Macrae. I am your worst nightmare."

He has also refused to disclose the location of roughly \$1.9 million, claiming that the police will steal the loot.

Francis-Macrae also was accused of sending spam that instructed recipients call a phone number. The number belonged to the Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire. Thousands of people called, jamming the police switchboard.

Francis-Macrae's six-year sentence was particularly tough, said Graham Cluley of Sophos, because he was not only a danger in cyberspace but also in the real world.

According to testimony, Francis-Macrae phoned investigators and told them he hoped they would get cancer. He threatened to slit the throat of one officer and plant bombs at police stations.

"Spammers are not known for their charm, but Peter Francis-Macrae really scrapes the bottom of the barrel," Cluley said. "He not only spammed people and stole money from them, but he also threatened to kill people."

#### Microsoft Readies Office 12 Beta

Microsoft is announcing the release of a technical beta of the next major upgrade to its Office productivity suite, code-named Office 12.

The release will go to a maximum of 10,000 customer and partners, said Eric Brown, director of central marketing for Microsoft's Information Worker EMEA unit, speaking at a conference here this week. Different customers will do different levels of testing and deployment, Brown said. Office 12 will go to a broad public beta next spring, the company said.

"It's certainly the case that we will expect these customers to get real experience with the product," Brown said. "It will be serious testing as opposed to having a look under the dashboard."

Office 12 will include applications such as Microsoft Office Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Access, InfoPath, OneNote, Publisher, Project, and Visio.

Microsoft has made major investments in the user interface and changed it significantly, Brown said. Microsoft has also worked extensively on enterprise content management, workflow processes and tools to enhance

collaborative work, he said.

Jeff Raikes, president of the company's Business Division, said Office 12 has many examples of ways to "seamlessly" move in between applications and functions. Also added are business intelligence functions allowing for simpler creation of data and the sharing of that data with other employees via servers, he said in an interview with the IDG News Service.

Some of Office 12's new features were demonstrated by Raikes on Wednesday at the IT Forum in Barcelona. One feature allows for what are termed calendar overlays, where an executive can see a personal calendar in the Outlook e-mail program and then overlay that with organization calendars on the network.

Outlooks can also be modified to allow for a combination of structured information with "unstructured" information, Raikes said. For example, updates to blog pages done by company employees can be fed by Really Simple Syndication (RSS) into Outlook.

Documents created in Office 12 will use Extensible Markup Language (XML) formatting by default, supporting Microsoft's moves toward the standard for Web-based services and sharing of information.

It's too early for pricing information, and Brown said it will be determined later based in part on customer feedback.

#### Feds Urge Us to Pay Our Taxes Online

Uncle Sam wants you to pay your taxes - simply. The U.S. Treasury on Tuesday launched a national campaign to urge individuals, tax preparers and small businesses to pay taxes electronically via the government's Electronic Federal Tax Payment System, or EFTPS.

Don Hammond, the Treasury's fiscal assistant secretary, said the "Simplify" campaign aims "to promote and educate people about our electronic payment system."

In the government's most recent fiscal year, 78 million EFTPS payments were processed, most of them from large corporations. At the same time, 42 million payments involved the traditional paper coupon and check.

Hammond said the electronic payments cost 53 cents less to process than the paper coupons and checks.

"So this will save us a lot of money and improve processing efficiency," he said.

Hammond added that there were fewer errors with electronic payments processing than with paper processing.

The payments that can be processed electronically - via the Internet, through a telephone voice response system or by other electronic means - range from the Social Security and federal income tax payments withheld from employees' paychecks to estimated quarterly taxes and excise taxes.

Hammond said the new campaign is "appealing to the smaller corporations that have not been taking advantage of the system," which has been

operating since 1996.

He said that many of the small businesses not yet using the EFTPS were concentrated in six states: New York, California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Texas and Florida.

The Treasury has set up a Web site at <http://www.simplifyeftps.org> with details on how EFTPS works and enrollment options.

The push for more electronic payments comes as the government has hit a milestone in the electronic tax arena: More taxpayers now e-file their returns than file paper returns.

### Online Shopping Comparison Sites on Rise

Laura Hanson relies on the Internet to make her a smarter shopper even when she isn't planning to buy online.

Before traveling to a conventional store, the San Francisco resident regularly visits an online comparison shopping site to explore prices and review product research so she won't need to embarrass herself with store clerks.

"With these (shopping comparison) sites, I can ask lots of stupid questions in the privacy of my own home," said the 27-year-old Hanson.

Yahoo Inc. runs Hanson's favorite comparison site - just one of many free Internet services that churn out pricing guides and other helpful insights about everything from iPod accessories to kitchen sinks.

The comparison sites are expected to play a central role in the upcoming holiday shopping season when Forrester Research predicts some 2.5 million U.S. households will buy merchandise online for the first time.

To grab more consumer eyeballs, they've laid on new features. Some are tracking more merchandise, others using the latest technology to alert shoppers to moneysaving deals or warn them about fraud risks. Still others supplement their price comparisons with product reviews and hard-to-find coupons.

"We are entering a new era (in comparison shopping)," said Rob Solomon, general manager of Yahoo's shopping site. "Now, we are all trying to figure out ways to differentiate ourselves."

All told, U.S. consumers are expected to spend \$18 billion shopping on the Internet between Thanksgiving and Christmas, a 25 percent increase from last year, Forrester estimates.

Feeling the pinch of higher gasoline and home heating bills, even consumers leery of Internet shopping are more likely to visit comparison sites to help steer them toward nearby brick-and-mortar stores with the best deals, predicts e-commerce analyst Heather Dougherty of Nielsen/NetRatings.

All the major comparison sites are free to use; they generate revenue primarily from referral fees for sending prospective customers to online merchants. It's a formula that's attracting big bucks as more consumers rely on the comparison sites.

The two most popular such sites, Shopzilla (formerly BizRate) and Shopping.com, were recently acquired in separate deals worth more than \$1.2 billion.

Meanwhile, venture capitalists have financed another wave of entrepreneurs promising to introduce even more useful shopping tools.

Michael Yang and his business partners have already raised \$11.7 million for their 9-month-old site, Mountain View, Calif.-based Become.com.

By coupling professional product reviews with pricing guides, Yang is confident he can do even better with Become.com than he did with his first comparison shopping site, MySimon, which he started in 1998 and sold to CNet Networks Inc. for \$678 million in 2000.

"Comparison shopping really is on the verge of becoming a mainstream service," Yang said.

Other new-wave comparison sites include:

FatLens.com, which has raised \$8 million in venture capital and believes it has come up with a more effective way of finding the best deals for consumers;

Dulance, which enables users to create wish lists and receive electronic notices of hot deals through RSS Web feeds;

ConsumerClub, eDeals and CouponCabin, which all serve up rebates and coupons from a wide assortment of retailers;

Dealio, which offers a shopping toolbar that alerts shoppers when they are about to buy something available at a lower price elsewhere on the Web;

SquareTrade, which offers a shopping sidebar that patrols the prices of online auctions and provides fraud protection.

"We haven't seen a terrible amount of innovation in comparison shopping during the past four or five years," said Talmadge O'Neill, co-founder of Smarter.com, another newcomer to the field. "We are still in the early days. There is a huge pie out there yet to be had."

As they angle for a bigger piece of the action, even long-established comparison sites are rolling out improvements designed to make themselves even more appealing.

Yahoo's shopping channel, shopping.yahoo.com, for instance, is now offering prices and information for about 90 million products, up from 60 million a year ago.

The Sunnyvale, Calif.-based company also is encouraging more social interaction on its shopping site by asking consumers to post lists of their personal recommendations. Yahoo plans to set up a system in which a consumer will receive a slice of Yahoo's commission if those recommendations send visitors to a merchant.

Besides Yahoo's shopping channel, Shopzilla and Shopping.com, other top shopping comparison sites include Google Inc.'s Froogle.com, PriceGrabber, NextTag and ShopLocal.

This group accounted for the bulk of the 49.3 million people who visited comparison sites during September, an 8 percent increase from 45.8 million at the same time last year, according to the most recent data from Nielsen/NetRatings.

At the top of the shopping cart, Shopzilla and Shopping.com each lured nearly 15 million U.S. visitors in September, Nielsen/NetRatings said.

In deals completed during the summer, Cincinnati-based newspaper publisher E.W. Scripps Co. bought Shopzilla for \$570 million and online auctioneer eBay Inc. paid \$685 million for Shopping.com.

Though they are attracting more traffic, none of the comparison sites so far have been able to establish themselves as indispensable e-commerce hubs. Most online shoppers still begin their research on the home page of a major Internet search engine, such as Google Inc. or Yahoo, forcing the comparison sites to advertise heavily to attract traffic.

"It's been a challenge for any of these sites to engender any kind of consistent loyalty so far," Dougherty said.

#### Web Site to Blend Journalism With Blogs

A media Web site scheduled to debut Wednesday will seek to blend traditional journalism with the freeform commentary developed through the emerging Web format known as blogs.

Some 70 Web journalists, including Instapundit's Glenn Reynolds and David Corn, Washington editor of the Nation magazine, have agreed to participate in OSM - short for Open Source Media.

OSM will link to individual blog postings and highlight the best contributions, chosen by OSM editors, in a special section. Bloggers will be paid undisclosed sums based on traffic they generate.

The ad-supported OSM site will also carry news feeds from Newstex, which in turn receives stories from The Associated Press, Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service and other traditional media organizations.

"We're deliberately trying to do something new by affiliating blog and mainstream people," said Roger L. Simon, a blogger and the venture's co-founder.

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, about 9 percent of adult Internet users in the United States have created their own blogs, and about 25 percent read them. The audience tends to be more influential: blog postings can affect what news organizations cover or politicians discuss.

Many details of OSM remain unsettled. For example, OSM wants to create a mechanism for citizen journalists, including bloggers, to submit original news during natural disasters, civil unrest and other newsworthy events. Simon said organizers still have to come up with ways to check submissions for accuracy.

Initially, OSM will create blog-like discussion panels surrounding major news events, with three or four bloggers and non-blogging experts chosen to contribute.

Although Simon and co-founder Charles Johnson are often described as conservative, Simon said the site will transcend labels and include bloggers of all political leanings.

OSM was founded last year as Pajamas Media, a play on bloggers' ability to opine from home at all hours, day or night. It has raised \$3.5 million from venture capitalists.

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